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State warns of home heating dangers

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As temperatures drop and citizens take steps to warm their homes, the Indiana

Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) and the Indiana State Fire Marshal urges Hoosiers to be mindful of the risks associated with home heating. Along with the colder temperatures that accompany winter, there is an elevated risk of dying from fire during this season. Statistics show the deadliest months for fires are typically December, January and February.

According to information gathered from the Indiana State Fire Marshal, heating equipment was involved in an estimated 520 home structure fires in Indiana in 2007. These fires accounted for 8 percent of all home fires and includes fires associated with chimneys and chimney connectors, space heaters, central heating, fireplaces, water heaters and heat tape.

"Space heaters present a greater fire risk than central heating systems," said Jim Greeson, Indiana State Fire Marshal. "Space heaters tend to be closer to household combustibles and the people occupying the homes, and they tend to require a more direct role by occupants in fueling, maintenance, and operation."

IDHS suggests following these tips for safe heating during the winter months:

- Maintain a 3 feet separation between things that can burn and heating equipment. This includes draperies, blankets, clothing, bedding, etc.
- When buying a new space heater, make sure it carries the mark of an independent testing laboratory and is legal for use in your community.
- Install your stationary space heater according to manufacturer's instructions or applicable codes.
- Plug your electric-powered space heater into an outlet with sufficient capacity and never into an extension cord.
- Use the proper grade of fuel for your liquid-fueled space heater, and never use gasoline in any heater not approved for gasoline use. Refuel only in a well-ventilated area and when the equipment is cool.
- Use only dry, seasoned wood in a fireplace or wood stove to avoid the build-up of creosote, an oily deposit that easily catches fire and accounts for most chimney fires and the largest share of home heating fires. Use only paper or kindling wood, not a flammable liquid, to start the fire. Do not use

artificial logs in wood stoves.

- Make sure your fireplace has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room. Allow fireplace and woodstove ashes to cool before disposing in a metal container, which is kept a safe distance from your home.
- Turn off space heaters whenever the room they are in is unoccupied or under circumstances when manufacturer's instructions say they should be turned off. Portable space heaters are so easy to knock over in the dark that they should be turned off when you go to bed.
- Do not use your oven to heat your home.
- Make sure fuel-burning equipment is vented to the outside, that the venting is kept clear and unobstructed, and that the exit point is properly sealed around the vent. These steps are to make sure deadly carbon monoxide does not build up in the home.
- Inspect all heating equipment annually, and clean as necessary.

Mr. Greeson suggests testing smoke alarms monthly and installing a carbon monoxide alarm in a central location outside each sleeping area.

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AFD to build new training center

By Aleasha Sandley, Herald Bulletin Staff Writer

January 07, 2009 09:14 pm

— ANDERSON — The Anderson Fire Department hopes to begin construction this year on the second phase of its training center on the city's south side.

The Board of Zoning Appeals on Wednesday approved a special exception for the center, which will make use of an abandoned restaurant at 5724 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. The renovated former restaurant will house classrooms and offices for firefighter classes and will be on the same property as a recently finished burn tower for firefighter training.

AFD will offer classes like basic and advanced firefighting, hazardous materials and command and control, Assistant Deputy Chief Mark Keck said.

"If it has to do with emergency services, we'll have it out there," he said.

Now, the department has a smaller classroom that can hold about 20 students, but the new facility will have capacity for about 110 firefighters. Other departments in District 6 are allowed to use the center and its outlying training facilities for free, but AFD expects to eventually make the classroom facility self-sustaining by charging to use its staff to teach classes there.

The facility has been — and will continue to be — paid for through a grant for the Indiana Department of Homeland Security and ambulance user fees.

In addition to the burn tower, the training grounds has a flashover chamber. Plans are to add a water extrication area and hazardous materials training area that will use simulated hazardous materials.

Firefighters, including Keck, will put in all of the hours renovating and constructing the new learning center, which could make the construction process longer than usual.

"We have a core group willing to help as much as they can," Keck said. "You find that firefighters have all types of skills. If you need something done, there's a firefighter out there who can do it."

Keck said he hopes in the end the center will become self-sustaining and add to the appeal of the south side.

"As we go along, we're hoping it will be in use every day," he said. "We want to take a dilapidated building and turn it into a showplace."

In other Board of Zoning Appeals business:

— The board approved a special exception and variance from the parking requirement for Full Gospel Church to meet in a building at 21 W. Eighth St.

— The board approved a special exception and variance from side-yard setback for an expansion of the Madison County Community Health Center, 1547 Ohio Ave.

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County declares emergency over corncob fire

DELPHI, Ind. (AP) - Carroll County's commissioners have declared a county emergency as firefighters try to control a fire smoldering in a 17,000-ton mountain of corncobs near Delphi.

Officials hope Wednesday's action will get help from the state and even the federal government to battle the fire at The Andersons cob mill and grain operations about 20 miles northeast of Lafayette.

So far, most of the help has come from about 30 volunteer fire departments from central Indiana. Carroll County emergency management director Dave McDowell says some firefighters have been working 12-hour shifts since the fire began Saturday.

McDowell says some fire equipment was starting to fail and two fire trucks had to be towed. But he says the fire is not a threat to the area.

Representatives from the Indiana Department of Homeland Security visited the site Wednesday and are expected to consult with local officials.

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Fire cause still not known



Wednesday, 07 January 2009

By Carol Anders Staff Writer

PLYMOUTH — The cause of a duplex fire on South Michigan Street and Ewing Street in Plymouth Dec. 2 that forced at least 12 people from the two apartments has still not been determined.

Firefighters from both the Plymouth Fire Department and the Argos Fire Department spend nearly seven hours battling the blaze.

Monday, officials from the Indiana Fire Marshal's Office began an investigation as to what may have started the fire.

Plymouth Fire Chief Andy Metsker said, "We have determined that the structure is unsafe and that it will hinder the investigation.

Metsker said they would be working with the insurance carrier of the owner at this point to determine how far they want to go to find the cause. He said it would be at the expense of the owner or insurance company if they want to demolish the structure to the point where it safe for inspectors to go inside.

Metsker said, "We know the fire started in the basement, but the determination of how will take some time."

Doors and windows have been boarded up on the home.

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January 7, 2009

Winter increases chance for fires, accidents and hypothermia

By **KELLY DAY**

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MUNCIE -- Some of the worst cold weather has already blown through Muncie this winter, but there are still a few months of cold weather ahead.

Icy roads and sub-zero winds can create dangerous conditions, both on the road and at home.

In December, slick road conditions caused dozens of accidents and slide-offs in Muncie and on the highway. And just before Christmas, a Yorktown-area resident lost her home after using a wood-burning stove for extra warmth and, just a day later, a Muncie woman's bed caught on fire from using an electric heater. -- But the danger doesn't end there. Cold temperatures alone have the potential to claim lives.

Check on your neighbors

The Indiana Department of Homeland security says it's important to check on elderly neighbors or neighbors who you think might not have sufficient heating in their homes.

Warning signs of hypothermia include shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech and drowsiness in adults and bright red, cold skin and low energy in infants, according to the IDHS.

If someone does show those symptoms, the IDHS recommends taking that person's temperature. If it's below 95 degrees, get medical attention immediately. If none is available, proceed with the following steps:

- Get the person into a warm room.
- Remove any wet clothing the person is wearing.
- Warm the center of the body first -- chest, neck, head and groin -- using an electric blanket or use skin-to-skin contact under loose, dry layers of blankets, clothing, towels or sheets.
- Give the person a warm, non-alcoholic beverage.
- Keep the person wrapped in a blanket, including their head and neck, after his/her body temperature has increased.
- Get medical attention as soon as possible.

Heat your home safely

Last month, one Muncie woman lost her home after her bed caught on fire from an electric heater and another Yorkown-area woman lost her home because of a fire possibly started by a wood-burning stove.

Alternative heating methods should be used with extreme caution.

"Electric heaters aren't what we recommend," Battalion Chief Terry Moore said recently.

Moore said when using an electric heater, round, heavy-gauge extension cords should be used, not flat wires. But ideally, no extension cord should be used.

Wood-burning stoves can be an effective, cost-saving method to heat a home.

But if they are too close to an object or are placed near wood floors or carpeting, they can be dangerous, Moore said.

Moore said that candles should also be used with caution.

The most important thing to remember with candles, electric heaters and wood burning stoves is to keep other objects away from them, he said.

If a fire does start from an electric heater, never use water to put out the fire, he said. Always use a fire extinguisher.

Drive with caution

Remember these safety tips from the Indiana State Police when driving in icy conditions this winter:

- Don't talk on your cell phone.
- Allow extra time for travel.
- Remove ice and snow from your vehicle's hood, roof, head lights and all windows.
- Remember that bridges, underpasses, shaded areas and intersections are more dangerous.
- Slow down and don't use cruise control on slick roads.
- Avoid abrupt stops and starts.
- Use low beam headlights to decrease glare from ice.
- Wear your seat belt.
- Move over and slow down for emergency vehicles.

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Pilot Programs Land Millions For Indiana

[InsideIndianaBusiness.com Report](#)

Hoosiers who applied for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Public Assistance Pilot Program will receive more than \$14 million in additional reimbursement. Applicants included state and local governments, as well as some private nonprofit agencies. The program temporarily waives certain disaster assistance regulations and allows public sector agencies and organizations to seek extra reimbursement for debris removal following a disaster.

Press Release

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana applicants who raced the clock on FEMA's Public Assistance (PA) Pilot Program expiration date will see the benefit of their diligence.

Applicants who had debris removal costs resulting from the state's two most-recent presidential disaster declarations – tornadoes and flooding that hit in the spring and additional severe storms and flooding that started in September – will receive more than \$14 million in additional reimbursement.

These applicants included state and local governments, as well as some private nonprofit agencies. The program temporarily waived certain disaster assistance regulations and allowed public sector agencies and organizations to seek extra reimbursement for debris removal following a disaster.

Severe storms, tornadoes and flooding that hit Indiana this year resulted in great amounts of debris. The Pilot Program waiver allowed federal compensation for both overtime and non-overtime labor costs for disaster debris removal. Under normal disaster response regulations, FEMA is only allowed to consider reimbursement for overtime costs for such work.

By law, the term of the program expired on the last day of 2008. To get the full benefit of the program, federal, state and local officials went to great lengths to complete all the necessary steps before the ball dropped on New Years Eve.

"Beating the deadline was no easy task," said Joseph E. Wainscott, Jr., Indiana Department of Homeland Security executive director. "The hard work of these officials has paid off for the people of Indiana."

"This is a great example of teamwork," said Regis Phelan, FEMA's federal coordinating officer for the Indiana recovery. "A lot of people decided they were going to get this done, and they did."

FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

Source: FEMA

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Published: January 9, 2009 3:00 a.m.

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Ice storm aid

Given the magnitude of the recent ice storm, more than a few area residents have wondered why the federal government isn't involved in the aftermath.

As if to add insult to injury, just Tuesday, state officials announced Indiana would receive \$18 million in disaster relief – all from flooding and other types of storm damage that occurred last year.

Here are answers to some questions about federal aid and the ice storm:

Q. Why isn't the city receiving federal aid after the ice storm?

A. State and local officials are calculating the costs of the storm, and it could still qualify for federal assistance. But at this point, it doesn't seem likely the ice storm will reach the threshold for federal aid.

Q. What would it take for the city to qualify?

A. Federal guidelines require Indiana to first be eligible for disaster relief, and then the state can award federal money to localities. Under the federal formula, Indiana would have to record nearly \$8 million in government costs from the storm, said Bernie Beier, the Homeland Security director for the city and county.

Damages to government property plus money government agencies spend for cleanup and overtime can be included.

While Fort Wayne and Allen County incurred much damage, surrounding areas were largely spared, making it more difficult to reach the threshold.

Q. But didn't AEP report spending more than that – \$10 million to \$12 million – due to the storm?

A. Yes, but as a large, for-profit company, those expenses don't count in the federal formula.

Expenses from Rural Electric Membership Cooperatives – smaller, non-profit, member-owned electric suppliers – do count. If the state is anywhere close to the eligible amount, Beier said, the Federal Emergency Management Agency will likely begin to work with state officials to see if any assistance is available.

Q. But I lost electricity for days, and trees damaged my home. Whenever we have a big flood, there is always information about how to apply for FEMA money. Why can't I get federal assistance for my property?

A. Damages covered by private insurance are usually excluded from federal disaster assistance programs. Floods are treated differently because many homeowners don't have flood insurance, and FEMA runs the federal flood insurance program.

“Different kinds of weather, different kinds of situations, have different kinds of insurance,” said John Erickson, spokesman for the Indiana Department of Homeland Security. “Flooding is largely uninsured. Other events tend to be insured.”

Q. Without federal money, how can the city afford to hire contractors to help clear the debris?

The additional \$300,000 to \$500,000 cost to hire private contractors to help clear neighborhoods of fallen trees and branches could help the state reach the cost level needed to get some federal reimbursement.

If not, Henry plans on seeking money from the Allen County Solid Waste District and tap into city reserves – which are meant for just such an emergency.

Mayor Tom Henry’s announcement Thursday about having both private contractors and city employees work on cleanup seems to be a good medium between relying completely on city workers – less expensive but with a longer timetable – or contracting out all the work – faster but more expensive.

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